



An Urban Design Resource Center for Seattle

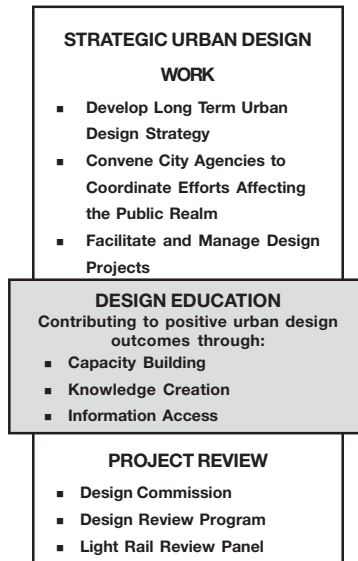
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city
design

URBAN DESIGN EDUCATION AND OUTREACH IN SEATTLE A STRATEGIC PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CityDesign, an office within the Department of Design, Construction, and Land Use (DCLU), was established in 1999 to serve as Seattle's urban design office. Its mission, "to shape the civic character of Seattle's built and natural environment by serving as a catalyst for design excellence in the public realm," is brought to life through three integrally related activities: strategic urban design work; project review, and education and outreach. Design education and outreach are central to CityDesign's mission and activities.



WHY URBAN DESIGN EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT AND WORTHY OF INVESTMENT

There is a clear local need for a citywide agenda on urban design, which focuses on urban design education and outreach, and is forged through partnerships between the public and private sectors.

The Vision:

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CityDesign is currently the only entity dedicated to addressing Seattle's urban design issues and challenges. But it is not the only one that influences the urban landscape. Urban design is interdisciplinary by nature, occurring at the intersection of the public and private sectors. Most of those who impact urban design come to the process with a particular focus, be it a building, street, or other public facility.

CityDesign's ability to serve as a catalyst for urban design excellence depends on the community's capacity to understand and be enthusiastic about attending to the Public Realm — to appreciate the impact of decisions on the broader environment, and to embrace urban design considerations as those decisions are made.

CityDesign's education and outreach activities can help ensure that those who affect Seattle's urban environment are attentive to design consequences, and that there is a continuous learning process as the City's landscape is shaped.

THE VISION: A PROGRAM AND A PLACE TO ADDRESS URBAN DESIGN EDUCATION AND OUTREACH NEEDS OF SEATTLE

The strategic planning process revealed a consensus around the need for A Program and A Place to address urban design issues for the whole City.

The Program

Actively engages people in a dynamic process of seeing new possibilities and as a result, creates better public places;

Reaches out and attracts a broader community of people to the world of urban design, opening up new perspectives on the City and its neighborhoods;

Strengthens our community fabric by engaging people directly in shaping their environment.

A Place and...

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The Place

These activities require A Place where urban design work can be made visible and accessible. The City's new Civic Center, under construction and currently with unprogrammed space, represents an exciting opportunity to showcase urban design and jump-start new education and outreach efforts. The Place should:

Be easily located and accessed by a broad constituency, including visitors to Seattle;

Be located in Downtown and at street level;

Open out onto the City as a rich laboratory for learning about urban design;

Provide space where people can come together across agencies, professions, and communities;

Offer a venue to challenge people's imaginations through visual and interactive exhibits and programs.

THE GOALS, STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Goal #1:

Increase Seattle's Capacity to Produce Good Urban Design

STRATEGIES to enhance the ability of those who directly impact the built and physical environment – City staff in relevant agencies, members of relevant Boards and Commissions, Community Councils and neighborhood groups, public officials, and developers — to incorporate urban design considerations into their decision-making.

Recommended **ACTIONS** include:

- **Urban Design @ Work**, a presentation and project demonstration package, which would be tailored to the needs of specific audiences, convey the elements of good urban design, facilitate application to actual projects, and explain the roles and responsibilities of City agencies that impact urban design;

a Program to...

- **Website enhancements**, featuring examples of good urban design in Seattle and elsewhere;
- **Forums, speaker programs and awards**, that address project-specific urban design issues;
- **Strategic use of relationships with the media**, as an opportunity for reaching the broader public;
- **Web-based survey**, to increase awareness of urban design issues and track public perceptions of change in neighborhoods.
- **Urban Designer in Residence program**, within City departments and agencies that serves as a liaison to CityDesign

Goal #2:

Increase Public Awareness and Appreciation of Urban Design through Partnerships with Civic, Educational, and Arts Organizations

STRATEGIES to be accomplished primarily through partnerships with complimentary organizations, to build on related and existing programs by incorporating urban design content.

Recommended **ACTIONS** include:

- **Public Events**, including tours, exhibits, lectures and forums that showcase urban design issues and examples;
- **Urban Design in Schools**, including activities designed for elementary and high school students;
- **Case studies**, using construction of real projects happening around the City to examine characteristics of civic spaces and activities in the 21st century;
- **Urban Design for Engineers**, to reach both engineering students and practicing engineers who work for the City and the State;

Address Urban Design Needs of...

Goal #3: **Establish a Place that Makes Urban Design Work Visible and Accessible**

STRATEGIES to create A Place to showcase projects and convene community discussions. The Place should be downtown, ideally within the City's Civic Center, at street level — so it is accessible to a broad constituency — and open out onto the City as a rich laboratory for learning about urban design.

Recommended **ACTIONS** include:

- **Space and exhibitry** planning, including convening discussions about space sharing and joint programming with other City agencies or non-profit groups;
- **Expanded exhibits** that capitalize on the themes of other educational activities and showcase urban design in Seattle;
- **A library** that contains materials (drawings, maps, models) to enable visualization of design possibilities.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

This is a 5-year plan which CityDesign intends to implement in three phases, from 2002-2006.

In 2002 the focus will be on building and enhancing current education and outreach work, and exploring the range of partnership and funding opportunities suggested in the Plan. Key activities will be to:

- Incorporate education and outreach elements into strategic urban design work wherever possible;
- Develop the base content for “Urban Design at Work” and other materials for outreach to various audiences;
- Explore and facilitate partnerships with City agencies and non-profit organizations;
- Begin to plan for a space for CityDesign’s outreach and education work;
- Develop a funding plan to guide implementation of the Strategic Plan.

the Whole City.

In 2003, the focus will be on expanding outreach work with the establishment of several new activities:

- Develop new case studies that treat the City as a laboratory;
- Identify and test audience for Urban Design @ Work;
- Establish Urban Designer in Residence program in a selected City department or agency.

In 2004-06 key activities will be:

- Development of new case studies and presentation materials as a basis for outreach to larger audiences;
- Broadening of the audiences for Urban Design @ Work, including regional and state agencies;
- Development of new travelling exhibits (with partner support);
- Development of a pilot project for schools (with partner support)
- Programming the new Place for CityDesign education and outreach (potentially with partners);
- Expansion of the Urban Designer in Residence Program to other City agencies.

Partnerships are Critical to Success

While some elements of the Plan will be accomplished by CityDesign staff, implementation of many of the strategies will require partnership with others. A key focus for 2002 will be to convene discussions with a dynamic mix of potential partners – some of whom have already expressed interest in working with CityDesign on specific projects. Partners might include area non-profit organizations focused on design, other government agencies, or civic and academic institutions. In the following years, the focus will transition to collaboration and joint ventures with established and evolving partnering groups.

As with urban design itself, urban design education should be a collaborative, multidisciplinary undertaking, drawing on the rich resources in our community. Partnerships are essential to the success of CityDesign’s Education and Outreach Strategic Plan.